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The Professional Organization of Social Work

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OF all the professions social work is the only one in which in its early beginnings the practitioner has been commissioned by one group to perform services for another group. Social service, in its earlier forms of charity, starts with the impulse to serve, which is a common possession. Gradually out of service to the individual emerges service to the community with the necessity not only for one group to serve another but for all to unite in promoting the common weal.

Thus, paradoxically, the effectiveness of social work as a profession in the public interest, depends upon making its motives, its aims, its knowledge and even its "technique," a common possession, seemingly abandoning the usually accepted basis of a profession as the organization of a group set apart through exclusive ability to perform certain tasks. In contrast with this exclusive status the invasion of all professions by the modern social ideal tends to the same effort to share knowledge with the community. The relation of the medical profession to public health education is an illustration. A profession, on the ethical plane, tends to become the use of knowledge and skill for the common good, and since service in the common good is not the function of any single group, both the knowledge and the skill of a profession may be increasingly shared with others who are working in the common interest.

The organization of a profession thus becomes an effort not to maintain

a status for the members but to enable the group, through its relationships within itself, to function more effectively than if its members had no such opportunity for united effort. Organization is needed, again, to make possible the relationships between different professions in the interest not of professional status or selfish advantage, but rather for the more effective functioning of each group in relation to every other group. Each group in its field must be the pioneer to push forward the frontiers of knowledge in order that the knowledge may ultimately become the common possession. At any one time, therefore, each group in its own specialty is necessarily in advance of the community, both in knowledge and in skill, but the share of the community in the ultimate objective of any profession must be constantly in mind.

These generalizations are advanced merely as a basis for defining what seems to us the stage of development of the profession of social work. Social workers have lacked, perhaps fortunately, the type of organization which is designed to maintain a privileged status for its members. The tasks of social workers have in their very essence depended upon the altruistic spirit of the community. The need for professional organization of social workers arises from the recognition that a group can function more effectively than a mere collection of individuals. But the dependence of the group upon enlightened citizen-

ship is increasingly recognized as the guiding principle of the professional organization of social workers.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

In contrast to the historical development of other professional groups, which began with the association together of practitioners and which only in recent years have undertaken the education of the community to co-operate in the work rendered by such professional groups, social work as a profession has grown out of a consideration of the problems involved by a broad body representative not merely of persons professionally engaged in such work but also of public spirited citizens. This body is the National Conference of Social Work, which held its first meeting in 1874 in connection with the American Social Science Association. Starting as the National Conference of Charities and Correction it grew in scope and numbers and, under its present name adopted in 1917, it is approaching its fiftieth year.

The first National Conference included representatives of boards of public charities from nine states and the discussion covered state laws and administration with reference to insanity, criminality and pauperism. During the first decades discussion centered upon the care of "dependents, defectives and delinquents" but even in the second year some attention was given to such problems as immigration. In the second year, also, it was found that persons not officially connected with public charities and correctional boards were desirous of attending and were competent to contribute papers.

The discussion of the care of dependents, defectives and delinquents was soon supplemented with an emphasis upon prevention, and this word,

with such other declarations as "the charity of today is the justice of tomorrow," became the keynote of the Conference. In the last two decades the widened range of topics has brought into prominence a new and constructive note. The discussion of leisure time activities, such as playgrounds and recreation leadership, has been approached not merely from the standpoint of preventing delinquency and ill health but also from the standpoint of developing a fuller and richer life and creating a spirit of tolerance and coöperative work. Similarly, the discussion of industry has not been content with papers on the care of the victims of industrial accidents, for example, and not even with preventive measures, but has taken up such fundamentally constructive lines as occupation in relation to standards of living, emphasizing the vital concern of the whole community therein.

From a handful of people dealing with problems in comparatively narrow fields of social effort, the Conference has thus grown so that every state is represented in an attendance numbering several thousand, and the fields of effort include family welfare, child welfare, hospital social work, occupational therapy, probation, protective, parole and prison work, psychiatric social work, school social work, visiting housekeeping, vocational guidance, adjustment of immigrants, coördination of social agencies, community centers, boys' and girls' clubs, playground and recreation, social settlements, civic work, housing, social legislation, public health nursing, social hygiene, mental hygiene, tuberculosis prevention, child health, industrial hygiene, community health activities, social research, social statistics, industrial investigation and public and private employment work.

RECOGNITION OF THE NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

With this growth in the consideration of the problems of *social work* it was not until very recently that attention was directed to the qualifications of the *social workers*. For decades the Conference was content with its often expressed dictum that "philanthropic effort needs not only a kind heart but some intelligence." Little thought was given to defining the real substance of this intelligence. Even after much progress had been made in analyzing scientific methods of handling the various types of work, there was a persistence of the conception of the worker as merely a benevolent person "doing good to the poor."

In 1897, however, a paper was read by Miss Mary E. Richmond on "The Need of a Training School in Applied Philanthropy." In 1898 the New York Charity Organization Society established a summer training class, directed by Dr. Edward T. Devine, which has now grown into the New York School of Social Work, the leading training school in the country, under the direction, at present, of Porter R. Lee. In 1905 Dr. Graham Taylor, of Chicago Commons Social Settlement, established the Chicago Institute of Social Science, developing it into the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, which has recently been succeeded by the Graduate School of Social Service Administration in the University of Chicago. At about the same time schools were established in Boston and Philadelphia. An essential characteristic of all these schools is their close relationship to the work of social agencies and organizations as providing opportunities for the student to engage in supervised field work.

In 1919, when an Association of Training Schools for Professional Social

Work was formed, there were admitted to membership nine universities and colleges and five independent institutions as offering professional courses requiring the full time of students for one year or more. The membership of this Association now numbers twenty-two.

Recognition of the importance of professionally trained practitioners in social work was impressively given at the National Conference of Social Work in 1915 by Professor Felix Frankfurter, of Harvard University Law School, who said:

I submit that what has been found necessary for adequate training for those social activities which we call the profession of law and medicine, is needed for the very definite, if undefined, profession we call social work. I can not believe that the preliminary training of a lawyer, most of his life spent in the adjustment of controversies between individuals, requires less of a background, less of an understanding of what has gone before in life, less of a rigorous critical discipline, than is needed by those of you who go out to pass judgment on the social conditions of whole communities, by those of you who administer laws like the minimum-wage laws, and the other social legislation now administered . . . by social workers. Secondly, I can not believe that a training fit to discipline people who shall guide and deal with the social forces of the day, can be done in less time than the time found necessary for the training of lawyers. Thirdly, I can not believe that the experience of medicine and law as to the quality of teachers to train men in those professions, applies less in regard to teachers of social work.

ORGANIZATION OF PRACTITIONERS

Organization of the practitioners has developed in three ways: In local groups, in groups of workers in specialized fields, and more recently in an all-inclusive association. Locally, social workers' clubs have been formed

in many cities. These have for the most part been loosely organized, including not only professional workers but interested laymen for the discussion of social work problems. In recent years, however, an increasing number of these clubs have shown a more definite professional consciousness and have established standards of admittance limiting their membership to professional workers. In specialized fields such organizations have grown up as the American Association of Hospital Social Workers. The National Federation of Settlements, while in some measure attended by members of boards of trustees and volunteer workers, is mainly composed of those who are professionally engaged in settlement work. The National Association of Visiting Teachers and Home and School Visitors, organized in 1919, has now one hundred and fifty members, representing twenty-eight cities, half of whom are professionally engaged in this field of work. The American Association for Organizing Family Social Work unites the family case workers throughout the country in coöperation with the boards of directors of family welfare and charity organization societies to define and promote standards of work in this field. To mention but one more example of the organization of social workers in a specialized field, the National Conference of Tuberculosis Secretaries brings together each year several hundred workers who are serving as secretaries or managing directors of tuberculosis prevention societies.

It is significant that the American Association of Social Workers, which is developing as the all-inclusive body of social work practitioners, is the outgrowth of an effort to study the qualifications of individual workers for specific positions and to place them.

From the experience of the National Social Workers' Exchange as a co-operative undertaking of social workers to provide an employment service, there came a growing appreciation of the need for more definite study of standards of qualifications and vocational analysis of the various types of work. Committees of the members of the Exchange actively engaged in such studies, and this effort rapidly developed a consciousness of the professional implications which were involved. In 1921 the annual meeting of the Exchange, attended by more than 1,000 members, voted to expand the organization into the American Association of Social Workers.

With a membership of two thousand and rapidly growing, this Association has earnestly undertaken the consideration of its own professional standards for admittance to membership. After careful discussion throughout the year by local groups in more than forty cities and by the national Council of the Association representing all sections of the country and all fields of specialization, the next annual meeting of the members in June, 1922, will have these standards before it for adoption.

DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Professional requirements are being worked out not merely on the basis of standards for admittance to this all-inclusive body, but also through careful consideration by committees of leaders in the various specialized fields. For example, a committee of the most experienced secretaries of tuberculosis prevention societies is at work on an analysis of the technique in this field and the qualifications in training and personality which are necessary. It is expected that as similar committees in each of the

specialized fields of social work conduct similar analysis, in coöperation with the research activities of the Association, definite conceptions and standards of what constitutes a well-equipped and efficient practitioner in each of these fields will be evolved. The combined result of such work through a course of years should bring about a more definite status for professional social workers.

The vocational bureau of the Association, continuing its service in providing vocational information and advice and placement of workers, affords through the body of data gained from its study of individual cases a basis for analysis and research. This has already been recognized by Professor James H. Tufts of the University of Chicago through his use of such data in his study of training for social work, made for the Russell Sage Foundation.

In the development of standards of professional training the Association as representing the body of practitioners is coöperating with the Association of Training Schools. The latter, at its meeting in Pittsburgh in December, 1921, invited the Association of Social Workers to appoint a committee of practitioners for this coöperation.

The first result of the Association's research is a pamphlet, *The Profession of Social Work*, which presents, concisely, vocational information covering all the fields of social work. This is proving of great value in colleges and universities, in schools of social work, in organizations choosing their staffs and in response to many requests for information about fields and opportunities. More than four thousand social workers are registered with the Association's vocational bureau, each of them providing information concerning training and experience. More than three thousand persons additionally have come to the bureau for

information about training and opportunity. As the Association's research further develops, information will be made available to practitioners, executives, boards of trustees and universities. A concrete instance of the need for such vocational information is to be seen in a recent request from the California State Civil Service Commission which stated that a number of positions, all in social work, were to be added to the State Civil Service. Information and advice were sought as to the salaries that ought to be paid and the qualifications which the workers should have.

The growth of social work as a profession has been greatly facilitated by periodical publications in the field. Foremost among these is *The Survey*. The uniting of *Charities* and *The Commons* in 1904, and the absorption of six other smaller periodicals, developed one authoritative journal serving both as a medium for the interchange of social information and experience and as a means of acquainting the general public with the facts concerning social conditions and the aims and methods of those at work for improvement. Many of the specialized fields have established their own publications, as for example *The Playground*, serving the play and recreation movement; *The Family*, serving the family case workers; the *Journal of the Outdoor Life*, serving the workers in tuberculosis prevention and also helping to educate the community along this line, and *Hospital Social Service*, serving those interested in that field.

Mention should also be made of the influence which the development of the profession of social work in America is having throughout the world. Visitors from European countries frequently show how much they are impressed by the organization of social

work in this country. And it is significant that the Czecho-Slovak Legation in America has no military attaché but is the first to have a social service attaché whose business it is to observe and investigate social effort in America and send back information to his home government.

DEVELOPING CONSCIOUS TECHNIQUE

At the National Conference of Charities and Correction (now called the National Conference of Social Work), held in Baltimore in 1915, Abraham Flexner discussed the question, "Is Social Work a Profession?" He developed six criteria for professions:

- (1) They involve essentially intellectual operations with large individual responsibility.
- (2) They derive their raw material from science and learning.
- (3) This material they work up to a practical and definite end.
- (4) They possess an educationally communicable technique.
- (5) They tend to self-organization.
- (6) They are becoming increasingly altruistic in motivation.

These criteria he applied to various occupations. He ruled out plumbing as acting on the instrumental rather than on the intellectual level, and as having shown "as yet no convincing evidence that the spirit of plumbing is becoming socialized." Banking he disqualified as being as yet far from "the application of economic science," with its practices still too largely empirical, and with the motive of financial profit too strongly stressed. Medicine, law, engineering, literature, painting and music he regarded as "unmistakable professions."

Social work he excepted as a vocation requiring intellectual activities but lacking independent responsibility, because he held that having localized

a problem "the social worker takes hold of a case, that of a disintegrating family, a wrecked individual, or an unsocialized industry," but is driven usually to invoke another agency, the doctor for illness, the school for ignorance, the legislator for poverty, so that "the responsibility for specific action thus rests upon the power he has invoked." Social work, in brief, is a mediating activity, without the definite and specific ends of medicine or law, but appearing rather "as an aspect of work in many fields." In line with this thought he concluded that "well-informed, well-balanced, tactful, judicious, sympathetic, resourceful people are needed, rather than any definite kind or kinds of technical skill."

This speech of Dr. Flexner's has been a useful challenge to social workers. Many of them are prepared to agree that social work gives evidence of having arisen out of altruistic motives rather than technical qualifications. They are quite ready to grant that the effectiveness of social work derives much of its power from close contact with other professions and from the ability to persuade members of other professions to bring their skill to bear upon the groups who are living in the community at an economic or social disadvantage.

CONTACT WITH THE OTHER PROFESSIONS

Close contact with the other professions is one of the inspirations of social work, but the contact consists not merely in the social worker's calling in the doctor or the engineer. Experience seems also to show that the more socialized the other professions become, the more they turn to social workers for light. When doctors become interested in public health not only are they the allies of social

workers in recognizing that the causes of poverty are also the causes of ill health, but they seek, also, to appropriate the knowledge and experience of social workers in dealing with these causes of poverty as problems for the individual or for the community. Likewise, nurses who aim to work in the field of public health rather than in private work seek instruction in schools which have been built up out of the experience of social workers.

More recently, the management engineer and the social worker have found coöperation necessary. The management engineer has discovered that the success of industrial management is largely conditioned by skill in human relations, and that the efficiency and coöperative attitude of a labor force is directly affected by the organization of life in the community, while, in turn, industrial conditions affect the community life. Naturally, when the management engineer arrives at that stage of thinking he finds that the social worker, approaching from a different direction has also arrived at the place where recognition of the relations of these two groups, the engineer and the social worker, become highly desirable for the success of each group. Industry is being invaded by social workers, who are bringing their experience to bear upon problems of personnel and research as they affect human relations. The Taylor Society has proved its recognition of these facts by admitting to its membership the so-called "social scientist," and recognizing in the experience of social workers in industry the necessary qualification for admission to a professional group concerned with problems of management.

The invasion of the schools by social workers is also proceeding rapidly. The visiting teacher finds

the need to build upon the experience of the social case worker. A recent report of the Vocational Guidance Association on the technique of training for that occupation reveals common ground with the experience of social workers. Indeed, the report was prepared by a committee whose secretary is also one of the secretaries of the American Association of Social Workers.

Similarly, the ministry is seeking to share in a type of experience which may be called, for want of a better name, the technique of the social worker.

Only as social workers are prepared consciously to formulate their experience as a guide for the practice of others, to make it available for these other groups, can they lay claim to the possession of technique. Their claim to permanence as a group, at least under present conditions, rests upon their ability to push forward to more effective experience and a clearer formulation of it, than at any one moment is shared with other groups. Toward what frontiers of skill and knowledge are social workers now pressing?

WHAT IS SOCIAL CASE WORK?

Under this title Mary E. Richmond, Director of the Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage Foundation, has just published a book which she describes as "an introductory description." Incidentally, it is significant that it follows *The Good Neighbor*, in which Miss Richmond stresses the common possession of neighborliness, and *Social Diagnosis*, in which she subjects the experience of case workers to the same sort of searching analysis that physicians in medical schools are subjecting the recorded cases of medical practitioners.

"There was real teaching in the

world long before there was a science or art of teaching," writes Miss Richmond in answering the question, What Is Social Case Work? "There was social case work long before social workers began, not so many years ago, to formulate a few of its principles and methods. Almost as soon as human beings discovered that their relations to one another had ceased to be primitive and simple, they must have found among their fellows a few who had a special gift for smoothing out the tangles in such relations; they must have sought, however informally, the aid of these 'straighteners,' as Samuel Butler calls them. Some teachers have had this skill, occasionally ministers of religion have had it, and secular judges, and physicians; though at no time has it been the exclusive possession of these four professions or of any one of them."

An objection to regarding skill in social case work as the technical possession of a few is voiced by Miss Richmond.

Even in our own day, the skill of the social case worker who is able to effect better adjustments between the individual and his environment seems . . . to many . . . neighborliness and nothing more. There is a half truth in this neighborliness theory, for the good case worker must be both born and made, but its element of error is the failure to recognize how much is being done in social work to develop a native gift through training and specialized experience.

Miss Richmond's definition of social case work implies in itself a task requiring as much training and as much content as that of the teacher: "Social case work consists of those processes which develop personality through adjustments consciously effected, individual by individual, between men and their social environment."

How far actual results were achieved

in social agencies by the skill which any intelligent person "without previous training but with tact and good will" might possess was a question which Miss Richmond sought to answer by a careful analysis of typical cases. She listed each act and policy of each case worker responsible for the treatment described. She secured six long lists of items which fell under the general heads of "insights" and "acts." She divided these again and secured the following four divisions:

Insight into individuality and personal characteristics

Insight into the resources, dangers, and influence of the social environment

Direct action of mind upon mind

Indirect action through the social environment

Her conclusion was this:

As I examined the items of each list of particulars carefully, it seemed to me that each item might possibly have been thought of and carried out by a non-specialist. But trained skill was shown in the *combination* of these itemized acts, which no untrained person, however intelligent, would have achieved.

It is impossible within the limits of this article to analyze more fully the claim of methods of interviewing and all of the other acts of diagnosis and adjustment to be regarded as the technique of case work. It is only possible here to point out that a department of the Russell Sage Foundation is devoted wholly to research, teaching and publication in the field of family welfare, in which social case work is the instrument. Moreover, in the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work, which includes in its membership family welfare agencies throughout the country, emphasis is consistently placed upon a type of service which recognizes that one learns by experience and by

knowledge how best to achieve a desired result, and that this experience can be recorded, analyzed and passed on to others. This kind of case work is applicable not only in the work of family welfare agencies, but in all the forms of social work with individuals, such as the activities of the probation officer, the visiting school teacher and the vocational guide, and even the personnel director in industry who is charged with responsibility for adjusting individuals to one another and to their environment. By this process of training the native ability, the family welfare organizations have emerged from the mere providing of food and shelter for the homeless to the giving of service analogous in the social field to that of the doctor for physical ills.

IS THERE A TECHNIQUE FOR GROUP WORKERS?

The social settlement movement differed from the older relief organizations or even from the present more highly developed family welfare agencies in its emphasis upon activities carried on for and by whole groups who constituted the neighbors of the settlement workers. Boys' and girls' clubs and debating societies in a settlement were a recognition of the value of the group for which more recent developments in social psychology are giving a scientific basis. It seems fair to say that settlement workers in general have achieved less by way of formulation of experience in methods of group organization than have the case workers. The settlement desired to emphasize what might be called "mere" neighborliness and to eliminate any tendency to regard the residents who made up its household as more expert in neighborliness than any of their neighbors.

Out of the great need, however, for

new recognition of the value of the group in a limited neighborhood may develop the clearer formulation of experience.

REFORM MOVEMENTS

In contrast with work for individuals, either separately considered or in groups, are what might be called the mass movements for reform. Through them efforts are made to modify environment, rather than to modify or adjust individuals in relation to their environment. Social legislation is one manifestation of the mass movement for reform.

Perhaps the best illustration of a consciously developed method of accomplishing reforms is the social survey. It was a committee organized by the former *Charities and the Commons*—the magazine of social work now called the *Survey*—which initiated and directed the now well-known Pittsburgh survey. The term "survey," itself, was taken over from the engineering profession by this group of social surveyors. Since that time the importance of the survey as the diagnosis of the community, directed toward the improvement of social and living conditions for all its people, has been demonstrated not only by the number of surveys undertaken, but also by the recognition that here was a tool requiring a combination of skill in its handling. How to bring groups together, to act together for a common object, how to discover and record facts with such insight as to develop a sound program of action, and how to communicate all this knowledge and the motive power for putting it into effect to the entire community, may be seen to constitute the technical problem of making surveys.

RESEARCH

The last of the four big divisions of social work, conceived functionally, is

research, if work with individuals, work with groups, and mass movements for reform be regarded as the other three. How far research which deals with social material can be accepted as ranking with pure science is a question not yet fully answered. Some years ago Mrs. Sidney Webb, in an illuminating article published in *London Sociological Papers*, 1906, discussed the claims of social research to be regarded as a science. She pointed out that science uses three methods of procedure—observation, the analysis of documents and experiment. Of these, social research may use observation and documentary material. But in experimentation the individual investigator in social science is seriously limited. He cannot, for instance, easily organize a trade union merely in order to study it and test its results, as a chemist can combine two substances and watch what happens. Nevertheless, the social scientist may bring to bear the power of observation upon the activities of the individual, a group, or a community, so as to record what might be regarded as an unconscious, involuntary experiment.

The inadequacy, from a scientific point of view, of many of the experiments which a community undertakes is the failure to study their results and the difficulty of isolating factors so as to measure their relative importance.

If the method of experiment has its limitations for the social scientist he may find some compensation in the fact that he has a method of procedure exclusively his own, as compared with the laboratory scientist, namely, the interview. The interview may be merely for the purpose of securing information from someone who possesses it, as the historian might find in the oldest inhabitant a source of facts in

the history of a town. Generally, however, the individual has a larger interest than this for the social scientist, for he finds in him not only a source of information, but a subject for study whose attitude of mind, experiences and emotions are all part of the material of social discovery.

As in social research it is possible to recognize these definite methods of procedure, so it is also possible to develop the best way of approaching the task, to study forms of record keeping, and to acquire consciously the methods of interviewing which will yield the most accurate results, as contrasted with the clumsy efforts which may make it impossible to disentangle the true from the false. Here, as in all science, the method must evolve out of recorded experience, and the output of social research in the past few years seems to warrant the hope that it will give the basis for a more consciously developed knowledge of how to make discoveries in the field of social relations.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

While thus far no definite and recognized code of professional ethics has been agreed upon by social workers, their devotion to ideals of service rather than to pecuniary reward, which has been uppermost since the beginning, is characteristic of a high ethical plane in their attitude toward their work. And the questions of ethics with respect to many problems which arise in daily practice are a subject of earnest thought and discussion in many groups. Out of this group thought and discussion a formulation of a code may be expected. The following tentative statements are suggestive of certain principles which would enter into such a code of professional ethics for social workers:

I

Practical activity and methods which can be tested by results form the real content of social work. Its moving force is the will of the people to subordinate the selfish interests of any individual or group to the social interests of the better community. If these aims are to be accomplished, the social worker must find his satisfaction primarily in achievements of the community, the group or the individual whom he serves. This aim will underlie his code of ethics in his relation to the community, to his clients and to his fellow-workers.

II

His zeal for the welfare of the community must be great enough to impel him to seek an exacting standard for testing his own efficiency. He will be eager to learn of the new discoveries of others, and alert to increase his knowledge of the social sciences whose application to the problems of social work will increase its effectiveness.

III

In his relations with other social workers, he will have a professional interest in the accomplishment of the group, will feel, therefore, a concern in the training and achievements of his fellow-workers, and will be eager to contribute his own experience to the knowledge of the group. He will be especially interested in the development of younger workers, and in such conditions of work as will increase the capacity of every member of the profession and secure for each the opportunities which will best utilize and develop his powers.

IV

As the effort to subordinate the selfish interests of any group to the welfare of the community will necessarily involve the social worker in controversial issues, he must make

scientific devotion to truth an essential in his work. The quality of his work and his independence of judgment and action must never be subordinated to the consideration of financial support.

V

He must be free to act and to express his views as a citizen. His guiding principle must be, however, that he has chosen to serve the community through social work and that, therefore, his best service as a citizen will be to conform to the standards of social work, furthering the scientific study of problems and the development of programs of action based on experience and facts. He will also be mindful of the importance of educating the citizenship of the community to meet its own social responsibilities.

To those who challenge the right of social work to be called a profession, the answer of many social workers is that to them the question is to a certain extent academic and less important than the effectiveness of their service. They have, however, recognized the importance of studying methods, attracting able persons to their ranks, working out methods of training and, in brief, so improving the quality of the social workers as to make social work itself more effective. The answer to the question, "Is social work a profession?" is to be found not in its present content as it is most commonly understood, but rather in its activities; not in the status of social workers as a group apart, but in the process of functioning as a group with conscious recognition of its relations with other professions. After all, the test of public service in every profession ultimately rests in its power to enlighten all the citizens of the community.